

LGBTI fact sheet 5 - Bisexual people

Additional considerations for bisexual people

Prejudice against bisexual people and bisexuality or 'biphobia' impacts on older people with bisexual histories in ways that can adversely affect their health and well-being (1).

- Bisexual people are more likely to be isolated and face discrimination compared to those who identify as gay or lesbian (2, 3) because they face discrimination from the heterosexual population and others within the LGTI community (4-8).

Incorrect assumptions

- Biphobia can include **incorrect** assumptions about bisexual people such as:
 - bisexual people are 'really' either gay/lesbian or heterosexual
 - they are confused or they can choose to be either gay/lesbian or straight
 - 'real' bisexual people are attracted to men and women equally
 - being bisexual is always a transient 'phase'.
- Bisexual people are not only affected by biphobia and monosexism (see *glossary*) (5) but they also face discrimination including homophobia and heterosexism when they are in opposite-sex relationships (9).
- These incorrect assumptions are made by some within lesbian and gay communities

as well as heterosexual people. This can lead to lack of recognition and acceptance of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation (3, 10).

- Such stereotypes and myths can also lead to 'erasure' - when people assume or claim that a bisexual person is straight or gay based on the gender of their current partner, or when people use the terms 'LGBT' or 'gay' community without actually including, or consulting with, bisexual people (11, 12).
- These experiences of prejudice may lead to difficulties in:
 - accepting oneself
 - being 'out'
 - finding supportive communities
 - seeking partners
 - locating resources and inclusive services.

***Note:** Bisexual people are less likely to be 'out' to their family, friends, health professionals and health care providers than those who identify as lesbian and gay (2, 13).

Health issues

- Bisexual people's health issues may differ from that of lesbians, gay men and heterosexual people.
- The additional marginalisation, exclusion and the lack of support and safety that 'community' provides (14) can result in bisexual people suffering the effects of biphobia alone.

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- This isolation can place them at greater risk of physical and mental health issues than their lesbian and gay counterparts (1, 6, 15).
- Bisexual people report poorer mental health and greater psychological distress than lesbian and gay groups with:
 - higher levels of anxiety and depression
 - increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours
 - higher frequency of financial problems which can limit their access to healthcare (1, 2, 4, 6-9, 16-19).

***Note:** Bisexual people also experience greater social and economic disadvantage than those who identify as lesbian and gay.

- Bisexual men are 50% more likely to live in poverty than gay men, and bisexual women are more than twice as likely to live in poverty compared to lesbian women (20).

Violence

- Bisexual people experience higher rates of sexual and intimate partner violence than gay, lesbian, and heterosexual people (12).
- Data from the US indicates that bisexual women experience significantly higher rates of overall and sexual violence when compared to lesbian and straight women (21).
- Forty seven percent of bisexual men also reported experiences of sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime (21).

- Despite the additional needs of older bisexual people arising from these factors, a lack of research and support services targeting this group continues (1, 7, 8, 22).

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See *Fact sheet 1 – Overview* for details.